

I could tell you the importance of a home but honestly you wouldn't understand it because the value of a home has a prickly slick and tingling numb feeling for each person.

A home for me was not tufted and warm, but dusty and abrasive, lack of a safe space established a punishment of sorts.

Turning to each room and remembering the specific harm that was dealt to you on that sofa, on that chair, on that bed.

I could tell you about finally feeling that speckle of safety in your home, in your bed, in that room. And how everyone promises you're safe now and protected. But when that sphere of safety is violated again it embraces that gritty feeling in your cheeks that is ruptured by the tears.

The stinging of the glass phone screen as you call 9-1-1 is another feverish stab into your fear of safety.

Every promise of a new found serenity is gone when you're stiff in your room and you can't move because no one is around to lift your arms and strut your legs for you.

The house never feels quite the same color, your blankets are never quite as soft, and everything always feels too cold or hot now.

Slowly building the home back up, and it remains wobbly because elastic and tape and glue cannot quite provide the same hold as the original mesh.

I could tell you...

I could tell you how it feels to struggle with your mental health at a young age.

Born on [REDACTED] in the Children's Hospital of Denver Colorado, I was a happy kid.

I jumped when I was excited, I cried when I fell, I was disgusted by the sight of vegetables, I was happy.

I couldn't tell you where it went wrong, but I definitely could tell you how it feels to struggle with your mental health at a young age.

Diagnosed with depression at the young age of 10 and then again at 15, I could tell you how it feels to not have a will to live at an age where I should've been excited to grow.

I could tell you how it feels to believe you aren't loved as a young child.

Being constantly told "You're young, you don't have any problems, stop being dramatic"

The little voice in my head with the reoccurring thought of "the world would be better off without you" as a fifth grader, was the first sign that I was struggling.

I could tell you how it felt to feel ignored.

Getting told you're "lazy" because the dishes weren't done, when in reality, getting out of bed was a huge struggle in itself.

Showering and eating slowly became a task that I did not deem as necessary and I truly did not experience the joy of being a "happy kid".

Falling asleep to the sound of my stomach rumbling instead of cartoons,

Staying inside feeling lost instead of riding my bike,

Learning how to self harm instead of picking up a new hobby.

Sitting in my closet for hours on end trying to disconnect from the world as a whole because I truly felt that I did not belong here.

Missing out on my childhood because I was too busy battling depression.

So again, I could tell you how it felt to struggle with your mental health at a young age.

I could tell you....

I could tell you how much i hate you.

I hate how we share the same smile.

I hate how we share the same nose.

I hate the way people say we are the same.

I hate how we share the same name and the way you use it against me.

I hate those nights I cried and the nights you were there.

I hate the way you never called or even tried with me.

I hate the way you hurt the ones I love the most.

I hate the way i can never fully hate you.

I still have love left for you.

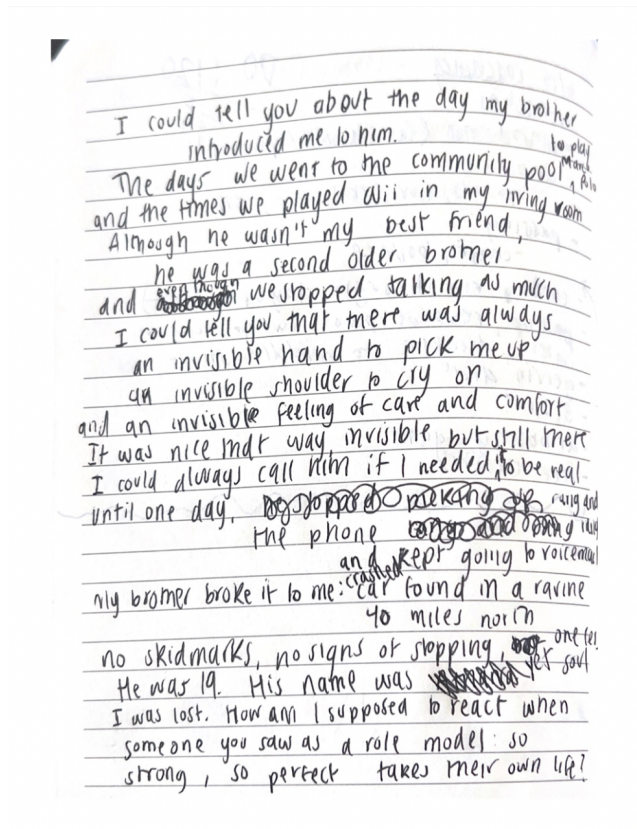
I have some hope left for you to change.

I hate fathers day because of you.

Thank you dad.

You are the reason why I am so strong.

I could tell you about the day my brother introduced me to him
The days we went to the community pool to play Marco Polo,
And the times we played Wii in my living room
Although he wasn't my best friend,
He was a second older brother
And even though we stopped talking as much
I could tell you that there was always
An invisible hand to pick me up,
An invisible shoulder to cry on,
And an invisible feeling of care and comfort
It was nice that way: invisible but still there
I could always call him if I needed it to be real
Until one day, the phone rang and rang until it went to voicemail
My brother broke it to me: crashed car found in a ravine 40 miles north
No skidmarks, no signs of stopping, yet one less soul
He was 19. His name was [redacted].
I was lost. How am I supposed to react when someone you saw as a role model
So strong, so perfect takes their own life?



“I Could Tell You” Poem

I could tell you that some days I carry the world on my shoulders

That some days I feel like the god, Atlas, holding up the entire damn sky

I could tell you what it feel like the hold my little sister, my life, when she sobs

For us to be alone, just her to be scared and me to be brave

Alone, even though we're in our own father's house, it is not a home, could never be a home

I could tell you how I hold back my tears, so my sister knows I'm strong, thinks I'm strong

Strong enough to take care of her when she is frightened, when she's lonely, when she can't take
the fighting anymore

I take it upon myself to take care of her in the day to day, on the scary days

I'm the one who tells her everything will be okay after another fight with our dad

I could tell you what it's like to be a child of a messy, ripping, powerless divorce

Yet to no longer be a child

I could tell you about the pressure I feel to be old, to be grown up, to be able to take care of
someone who cannot be those things

I could tell you that some days I carry the world on my shoulders

I could tell you...



I could tell you what it feels like to be on the brink of grey
An infinite expanse of numbness
Of half lit eyes
And tired muscles
Of a nauseous stomach
I could tell you what it feels like to know the sweet bliss of joy that tastes like honey
Of excitement that makes you shiver
And dreams that make you squeal
I could tell you what it feels like to stand on the edge of joy and apathy
I could tell you what it feels like as the pressure comes crashing down on your shoulders
Crushing your clavicles
Squeezing your lungs
I could tell you what it feels like to sink slowly
I could tell you what it feels like to fear
Fear the future
Fear what might happen if the mountain isn't climbed
I could tell you what it feels like to reach the summit, only to realize it was a hill compared to the next one
I could tell you what it feels like to relax-
-I used to be able to tell you that
I could tell you what it feels like to put your head down and drive
To push
To be a bull
To be a race horse
I could tell you the relief of crossing the finish line
The salty, sweaty, gritty relief
I could tell you what it feels like to be angry
To be angry when they tell you to stop working
To be angry when they tell you to work harder
To be angry at yourself
At everyone
At the world
If my accomplishments each added a year to my life,
I'd be immortal
But they don't
If anything
The stress, the anxiety, the fear
They shorten it
I could tell you what it feels like to have done so much yet absolutely nothing at the same time
But I think we all know that feeling already

I could tell you that it didn't affect me that much, that it was just a little burden, but that would be
a lie

When I get in bed at night, I just have to get right back up to fix the door,
The little voice in my head says, "you better do it, or else"
I have two brains, one, is my real brain, and the other side is the side that takes over when I'm
the most vulnerable.

My other brain tells me to do things all the time.
And my real brain says no that's stupid
It is a turf war between two sides, and I'm stuck in the middle.
I get up, fix the door, and lay back down.

But then I have to get back up to fix my pillow on the ground
Make sure it's completely straight
No turns, must be smooth
If it's not I have to try again

Finally after 2 minutes I lay back down in bed
"Hey [X], remember the lamp?"

I sigh and I make sure the lamp is at the perfect angle, even though its off
My back starts to hurt from sitting up but if I lay back down, my brain will tell me,

Come on [X], it's just one more thing, it's just one more thing
And that one more thing turns into 5 more things and then 10 more things.

I have lost 20 minutes of sleep and it's all for nothing
The same cycle would happen tomorrow.

I could tell you what it feels like

The bright beaming of the Sun
The fresh beauty of the ocean
Darkening
As two black birds fly by my window
The once bright day
Overshadowed by a heaviness
A weight that brings you to your knees

I could tell you what it feels like

The once sturdy, impenetrable ballon
Deflated in a matter of seconds
A trapping spiral
That pulls you into your own world
Overwhelming brightness in a matter of seconds

I could tell you what it feels like

The voices taking over
They make you feel as if your less than
Implanting the strongest doubt
Increasing the heaviness, weighing densely around your heart

I could tell you what it feels like

Putting on the mask every morning
Hiding behind the smile

A fortress of solitude
Thought to be known as courage
Yet that courage only builds a barrier that blocks you from the sunny day

If only I had real courage
To take off the mask
Then I could leave my fortress
Breathe in the freshness of the sun
Or the beauty of the ocean
Leaving the heaviness behind
Living with a looseness that I once took for granted

But one can only dream

Troublesome



I could tell you about the damage of his words,
the loneliness I felt,
when my teacher told me I was “troublesome.”

He said it’s my obsession with perfection and
inability to maintain stability
when I have rain on my cheeks,
puddles in my eyes,
thunder booming in my head saying,
“You should have studied more,”
“You should have worked harder,”
“You should have done better,”
that makes me this way.

I have a storm in my head.
Tornados of thoughts, worries, doubts
surround me until I am nothing
but a cloud of dust.

That’s why I wondered,
“What would he say if he knew my mind,
the convoluted roots beneath my surface?”

Would he call me “stubborn” for never giving my bed a moment to rest,
refusing to leave home if a pillow is even slightly out of place?

Would he call me a “fanatic” for reciting college acceptance rates like the pledge of allegiance,
each name,
each number,
permanently etched in my mind with irreversible ink?

Would he call me “ridiculous” for spinning in circles,
trying to chase standards I can never actually meet?

If only he understood the discomfort of my unscratchable itch
for control,

for order,
for worth.

I am the victim of a world of chaos.
Every decision, every action, becomes
a never-ending spiral of worry.

If only I could tell my teacher how troubling
that word is to me,
“Troublesome,”
how it has made me ashamed of who I am.

I could tell you the pain I felt,
sitting there and nodding,
pretending like I was okay.

I Could tell you

The loss of a loved one is one of the most painful things one can experience. The loss of my father who was nothing more than a stranger was a tornado of emotions.

I could tell you how cold the inside of a funeral home is.

I could tell you how loud and gut-wrenching the cries of those around me were

I could tell you how cold the hugs I received from strangers were

I could tell you how loud and gut-wrenching my thoughts were

'We shouldn't be here'

'We don't belong here'

'You don't belong here'

I could tell you painful it was to look into that casket and see the man I was supposed to call "dad" lying there

I was introduced to everyone by someone
who claimed to be my tia.

Someone that claimed to be my family

"Hi im your tio"

"Hi im your tia"

No. You aren't

"These are your cousins"

No. They aren't.

They claimed to be my family but they
didn't know my name

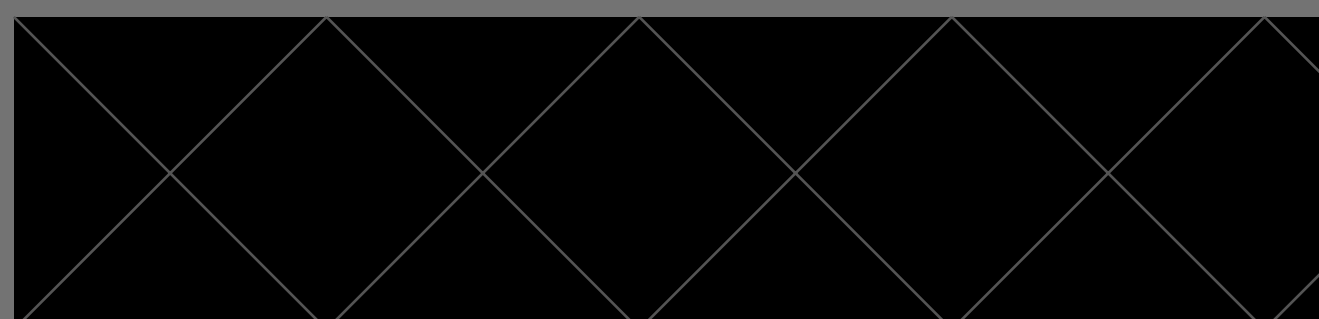
They knew nothing of me and I knew
nothing of them

Just like strangers

I could tell you how angry I was towards
these people

I could tell you how hurt I was

I could tell you how angry I was at myself
for crying for a stranger



I could tell you ...

I could tell you about when I tore my ACL, the moment I thought my life was going to change for the worse.

I could tell you about how I hit the three to send the game into OT, then with 10 seconds left, planted and had my knee collapsed in by a girl 10 inches shorter than me. I could tell you about how miserable I thought I'd be.

I could tell you about the way I felt when I got hit.

My knee dove inward, my knee cap was out of place.

I hit the ground with a smack and all the air left my lungs.

I could tell you about how my Dad wasn't even allowed to be in the gym, only one parent from each team could be in to record the game. I could tell you about how I imagine he reacted when the parent from our team ran out of the gym, searched the crowd and frantically told him to come inside.

I could tell you exactly what I said to my coach while I was on the ground.

I could tell you that I knew right away I'd torn my ACL.

I couldn't tell you how I knew, I just did.

I could tell you about that one moment starting 11 months of rehab, plus another 3 weeks when I had to have surgery again to clean up my kneecap.

I could tell you about almost quitting, numerous times.

I could tell you about how alone I felt at times.

I could tell you all about how mentally challenging it is to be separated from your team; people who are more family than friends, who love you, who couldn't stand to see you like this.

I could tell you how painful it was to go from 2 high-intensity workouts per day to doing quad sets once an hour, unable to even go to the bathroom unaided.

I could tell you how I cried in the shower, breaking down on random days.

I could tell you how I still wonder if I'd be in a different situation if I hadn't gotten injured.

I could tell you about the day my life changed.

I could tell you about when I tore my ACL.

I could tell you how it feels to not fit in with the herd. None of the other horses understand me. They all think I'm strange, weird, and crazy. They can't fathom why I eat cotton candy nebulae, cry sparkles, and lay awake at moonlight to charge my rainbow magic force. I've had to spend my whole life hiding who I truly am from them. I have to practice neighing just like them, mirror the way they clop and trot, and do my best to be an esteemed equine! I could tell you the turmoil I go through trying to appease them: I cover my alicorn, hide my behaviors, and go out of my way not to spook them, I will always be a challenge to their balance. I confound them and astound them. I am a unicorn.

~

I could tell you how in the beginning I was "normal" I was born on [REDACTED] weighing 8 pounds and 7 ounces. I had a great infancy and toddlerhood. I hit every developmental milestone I was supposed to.

I could tell you how In pre-school I started to definitely delineate from my peers. I would cry about everything. I was over-emotional, I struggled to make friends. I was weird. I was strange. I was un-understandable. Nobody knew why I was so awkward, and why I never knew how to properly interact with my peers.

In 3rd grade I was recognized as gifted and talented. I got along better with adults. Yet I still didn't fit in with my peers. Nobody knew why I cried so much, why I struggled to make eye contact, or why I was **so weird**.

In middle school, I silenced myself in the hopes that me not talking would conceal my weirdness and strangeness so that others would accept me. I would have these big theatrical breakdowns that made people think I was, "crazy", "dramatic", "attention-seeking" etc.

In highschool, I promised myself that I would stop crying. I learned to mask. I learned to uproot many of my unknown neurodivergent seeds and synthetically "replace" them with neurotypical seeds. As I aged up I started to feel as if "Everyone loves me, but nobody likes me."

All my life, I've tirelessly trained to be the greatest actress of all time: I have erased the physical pain I experienced forcing myself to make eye contact, I now can maintain it effortlessly; I don't bombard people about my hyper-fixation of the week and info-dump about my various vast special interests; I force myself to interact and be social even if I'm overwhelmed. I too was met with the ableism impostor that so desperately wanted to be "normal". I participated in the **revolution** that taught me I was a burden to society, and I should seek to be "normal."

The moment, Dr. Sandra Lee Webster told me that I was autistic, was the single greatest experience I have ever had in my life so far. I wasn't weird, I was autistic. I wasn't strange, I was autistic. I didn't just have Major Depressive Disorder, General Anxiety Disorder, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, I was also actually autistic! It was then I had the courage to start a personal **revolution** of my own.

Even though I was elated, ecstatic, and over-the-moon, I knew what was coming: People telling me I don't "look" autistic, I don't "seem" autistic, I'm not really disabled, I'm high-functioning, I don't need this support/help, I'm not really who I say I am. You're no **revolutionary**, you're just a retard.

I don't know why I get upset with the most trivial and minuscule changes. I don't know why my room is a mess, but I am scrupulously meticulous and organized about all else. I don't know why I am despondent when people touch my stuff. I do know that I am autistic and I was born this way. Perhaps the biggest lesson I've learned is that even after my diagnosis, neurotypicals will never understand me. I will always have to make up for others' ignorance and make accommodations for them. Neurotypicals will never see the floating duck who is always working to appease them. They will never see the struggle beneath the surface.

Even with my disabilities, ADHD, and Autism, I remain joyful, positive, and optimistic! I am a unicorn. I am weird and different, and unique. I am twice exceptional and twice challenged. I am proud of who I am and if given the choice to be divergent or typical, I will forevermore choose divergent. I am a leader, dreamer, innovator, visionary, and hopefully: revolutionary. All of my experiences make me truly sui generis, one of a kind, and I wouldn't have it any other way. I am magically magnificent, I am a unicorn! Watch how well I do this!

I could tell you when poem:

I could tell you a time where I looked up to him as my dad
The person who has withered away into someone I don't fully recognize
Who I hope to forget
I hope to forget his thin curly hair that my small fingers could easily glide through
I hope to forget his dark, brown eyes that never saw the way my mom tried to love him
I hope to forget the way his chapped lips would graze my cheek in a way that made me blind to
his imperfections
I hope to forget
I could tell you when I would fall asleep limply on his shoulders when sleep would overwhelm
my body and mind until I eventually gave in
I could tell you all the times I put on a loving face to ward off the shame and discomfort I felt
when I just wanted to get away from him
The person I was supposed to love
The person who was supposed to be there
I could tell you when I was surrounded by water and it felt like I was drowning but my feet were
on the ground
I could tell you when I broke down crying after suffocating myself with feelings I didn't want to
admit
When he finally left for good

If I could tell you

If I could tell you I would let you know.

If I could tell you I know my truth.

If I could tell you I am not perfect, but i bring
love and strength.

If I could tell you I do bring lots of value.

If I could tell you I am okay with me.



Poem

I could tell you about all the fulfilling memories I had with her. She was my mother, the best human in my eyes. I experienced my best times with her. The day when I received her tearful phone call I did not know what could await. She spent so many days in pain, the person I had always loved was slowly leaving me. I could tell you that there were no happy days. I could tell you how everyone put on a brave face even though it was the hardest time of our lives. I could tell you about my last day with her. I could tell you the way I held her hand and kissed her skin for the last time. I can tell you that I knew she had left my world.

Time, that materialistic feeling that we are told to hold onto so dearly. When I think about the time I lost you my muscles tense up. My brain becomes foggy and my heart becomes heavy. The time slipped right out of my fingers. I think about the time we laughed, we cried, we loved, and we held each other through life. You always made my smile a little bigger and always challenged me to be the best person I could be.

Time, how quickly it went when I lost you. I remember being mad because I didn't understand who you were. I was scared you were leaving me. I was scared that our time would slip away. Sitting at the school cafeteria, the music from the fun blasting all around. You are crying in another room. I didn't understand. Time wouldn't let me. Time told me to do what I wanted, to enjoy.

Time, you hung over me for the rest of the school year. Seeing you sit alone across the lunch table. Although I was surrounded by "friends" I felt so alone. Time, why didn't you tell me to go over and sit with you? Time, why didn't you stop it all? Time, why did you make me lose my best friend?

Time, I see you everywhere now. Although it's been four years, seeing you in the halls makes me want to cry. Although all this time has gone by you are and always will be the only person who understands. The only person who took me for who I was. The only person who I considered a best friend.

Time, you have forced me to move on from her. And I have. But you have been cruel, because I always think of the times I was with her.

As I swallow hard while not able to breathe
I wasn't sure what was really going on
I just remembered the night before was a disaster
that know one knew about it
I walked into my lit class was playing my music
With my hoodie on and my head down.
Suddenly I found myself hugging my lit teacher
Bursting out in tears
I knew this wasn't myself
And I was scared
The worst phase of my life had started months ago
But I've started to notice now.
I started to notice where my headspace was
It wasn't healthy and i started to panic
Oh what would others think
I deeply went into a hole of depression without knowledge
Not able to function normally
I thought no one would understand so I struggled alone for months
I thought why would anyone want to hear my thoughts
And it was weird talking about it.
I could tell you that there
Is this pain that comes from talking about it
It is not comfortable talking about that you don't want to exist anymore
For whatever reasons
It is not comfortable talking about what you have to depend on to live.
I was always known as the life of the party type girl
But i use to go to the party and j sit on the cold bathroom floor
Wondering why i hated myself
Everyone said i was a mess my dad hated me they said i was dumb, fat, and have a brain size
of a whale
I was no longer the life of the party or the girl the screams at the tv during nba finals
I was no longer the class clown or the most bubbly person.

The weight.

I like having weight on me.

And no I don't mean the weight that people fight so hard to burn off, the weight that kills people by reaching their heart, the weight that makes people feel useless in life.

I'm talking about controlled weight.

The weight of an extra comforter.

The weight of a pillow on my legs.

The weight of the burning water settling into my skin.

The weight of a hug with an extra squeeze.

I like the weight of things that I can easily remove.

I can remove a pillow, a blanket, or hot water.

But

There's this one constant thing that weighs on me that I can't control.

This is the heaviest weight I've ever been tasked to carry.

This weight weighs down on your bones.

Erodes your bone marrow over time.

The thing is I never asked for the weight of this.

I can never seem to lift it off me long enough to throw it away.

It's so heavy that it's seeped into the fibers of my being and has merged with me.

Its weight over time wore me down and weakened me.

I can no longer fight back.

I've lost too many rounds trying to lessen the weight.

In a way, the weight has become familiar, comforting even.

It has stayed with me when no one else did.

It's been there while I sat in the dark.

It smothered... no, hugged me while I cried.

I did not ask for this weight and do not relish in it

But

It's the only thing that's been there with me through all the toughest of times.

I Try

Caged I try and I try
When will I get there bluebird through my window
The kitchen is full of talking parrots
living room more like dead room makes me want to catch a
break
The restroom is occupied with kids like bees buzzing about
Outside I wonder to take a break but just like I thought
I am in a cage

When will I get there bluebird through my window
The wind is fresh breathe in
But I feel stuck like a pest stuck in amber
I feel like I can faint like a feather fall
Or like ashes blowing in the suffocating stuffy air
The noise is loud and the laughter is warm
But I don't seem to fit in with them
Some times am sad sometimes am mad
Yet they are still here

The wind is fresh breathe in
I wonder why they even bother to stay
I am grateful for them they are my life
yet I overthink it like a broken disc replaying
Over-over-over again
I want to go back in
To young for the adults and to old for the
kids
I wonder and wander around here lost in this
House

I wonder why they even bother to stay
You made me feel accepted you invited me
in
You told me your story
you were brave
You made me feel welcomed , you defended
me
I appreciate the thought that you trust me
Your my favorite cousin
Thanks

I could tell you about the empty chair at the dinner table, and the silence that replaced his laughter. I could tell you about the bottles that took him away, the promises left hanging in the air.

I could tell you about birthdays spent waiting, candles burning low with no one to blow them out.

I could tell you about tears that fell quietly in the night, learning to find strength in solitude.

I could tell you about laughter that faded too soon, about forging new paths in the absence of his guidance and tell about resilience discovered within, hope growing despite the brokenness.

I could tell you about friends who became family and dreams chased on my own, lessons learned despite the shadow of his absence.

I could tell you about finding light after the storm, courage emerging from the pain. I could tell you about a heart that learned to heal, a life that found its own way forward.

I could tell you that there's something beautiful in the rainbow after the storm that almost makes all the prior pain feel worth it

That time when you can finally feel the sun on your skin and look at your feet on the ground and not be scared that the world is going to crumble beneath you

But I could also tell you that every moment before that point is an indescribable pain that I can only express gratitude for when it's all over

College from the outside for me has looked fun, amazing, some could say glamorous

But beneath the warm smiles and photographed fleeting laughs are the hardest four years of my life

It's the years that I've felt the most alone and had to confront my worst fears

It's the years that I had to lose in order to gain

It's the years that I lost parts of myself in order to finally find my real self

I never knew mental health was important until my anxiety stopped me from being able to normally function

My ADHD medications made me feel numb to anything that used to make me happy

I started going to therapy during my sophomore year and have been going every week since

I have been fighting my mental battles in an ongoing war and I can finally say that I think I'm winning

And now that I'm winning I want to help others win

And I can tell you that that's why I want to dedicate my life to mental health